

HONORING REVEREND LEON H. MATTHIAS

HON. DONNA M. CHRISTENSEN

OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, December 7, 2011

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a devoted servant of God, the Reverend Leon H. Matthias who will retire from active ministry on December 31, 2011.

Sunday, December 8, 1946 seemed to be a perfect day for the arrival of Leon Henson Matthias to George and Ethel Matthias. His humble home provided his first real setting where Christian nurture would take place. The family were members of Gracefield Moravian Church in Cedar Grove and Adrian Joseph, the grandfather, was the sexton of this small congregation.

After primary and High School he gained four subjects at Ordinary Level from the University of London. In September 1967, he entered the teaching profession and was appointed as an uncertified teacher at the St. James Government School in Cedar Grove where he had received his early primary education.

At 19, he was elected as chairman of the Board of Stewards at Gracefield. The members of the congregation recognized that God was calling him to a special task in His church.

Leon Henson Matthias began his theological training on the island of Trinidad in 1970 and in 1974 he completed the Licentiate in Theology at the United Theological College of the West Indies in Kingston, Jamaica. He served as student pastor in the Antigua and Tobago Conferences and on August 24, 1975 Brother Matthias was ordained a Deacon. On September 1, 1975, he began his first appointment as a Moravian Pastor in St. Kitts. Six years after his ordination as a Deacon in the Moravian Church, Rev. Matthias was consecrated a Presbyterian.

On August 28, 1976, Rev. Leon Matthias made another decision in his life. He joined in matrimony to Mable Hall in that beautiful western Jamaica Town of Montego Bay. God blessed this marriage with three wonderful sons, Lennox, Leon Jr. and L. Richard.

From all accounts, Brother Leon was as popular as he was active. He has always had an abundance of energy that seems contagious, and this has manifested itself throughout his life and the life of anyone with whom he has had contact. As an executive of the Rivals Sports Club in Cedar Grove, where he was a serious cricketer and concert performer, to Youth Soccer Coach in Richmond, Virginia, he displayed versatility and his love of sports.

Rev. Matthias has always enjoyed leadership roles in the church and the community. He however developed a new interest in 1992. In 1990, he was invited by the Lutheran Church in the United States Virgin Islands to participate in an oral history workshop led by Judy Saxton of Baylor University. This opened for him a vast new field of inquiry and an unquenchable thirst for the unwritten folk history of his people. This he has pursued in his visits to Tanzania, London, Johannesburg and Cape Town.

The versatility of the good Reverend has also been manifested in his editing of many

publications including Rapport' magazine and the writing of four books—Boy from Popeshead (1995), Against the Odds (1996), A history of the Friedensberg Moravian Church, Tales from the Hill (1997) and Winds of Change (1999) Gracefield—A Northern Star(2005)Down Punty Hill(2008)A Cloud of Great Witnesses (2011).

Brother Matthias holds a Licentiate in Theology from the University of the West Indies and a Master of Arts Degree from the Presbyterian School of Christian Education. In 2002 he obtained an, MLS Degree from Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, specializing in Archival Studies.

His ministry has spanned forty years and the Western Hemisphere—beginning in Jamaica as a Student Pastor in 1971, serving the Virgin Islands Conference in St. Croix from 1988 to 1996 and St. Thomas and Tortola from 1996 to 2000, then New York from 2002 to 2009 and lastly in Washington DC.

In that time he has served in many positions of church leadership, has mentored many young pastors and served every congregation and community with excellence, dedication and compassion. We are thankful to God for his service, which overcame many obstacles over the years, and for his family who served by his side these many years.

I ask my colleagues to join me in asking God's blessings on Reverend Leon H. Matthias, his wife, Mable and the entire family with gratitude for a life of exemplary service.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. JOSEPH CROWLEY

OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, December 7, 2011

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, on December 6, 2011 I voted "no" on H.R. 2471; I intended to vote "yes."

THE PASSING OF MY DEAREST
FRIEND AND CBC FOUNDATION
FOUNDING MEMBER, OFIELD
DUKES

HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, December 7, 2011

Mr. RANGEL. Mr. Speaker, as a Member of Congress, I have been blessed to call many wonderful people my friend, but none more than Ofield Dukes. I am extremely saddened by the passing of such great man who had significant impact in not only my life, but that of my Colleagues in the Congressional Black Caucus, dating back to its founding. Aside from his many accomplishments in business, politics and his personal life, Ofield was simply a true and kind person who sought to make our country a better place for all. I will forever miss his virtue, justness and sincerity.

Ofield was the best communications strategist in Washington. He helped organized the first Congressional Black Caucus (CBS) dinner in 1971 and served as an advisor to numerous CBC chairpersons. He was a founding member of the CBC Foundation and served on the Foundation Board (CBCF) for 14 years. As the

first chairman of the Foundation's Finance and Fundraising Committee, Ofield was instrumental in developing strategies for fundraising including recruiting business support and active involvement.

Ofield's devotion to his craft was esteemed by everyone. In 1988, Ofield was selected by CBC Chairman Julian Dixon to serve as chairman of a historic black-tie dinner in salute of U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. When the CBC Chairman Clyburn needed a person to organize and edit the first news letter of the CBC-CBCF, he called Ofield and for seven years he did a superb job in editing the CBC-CBCF newsletter.

In addition to his work with the CBC & CBCF, Ofield was dedicated to fighting for racial equality. He served for 10 years on the board of the MLK, Jr. Committee for Non-Violent Social Change and as an advisor to Mrs. Coretta Scott King. He also served as an advisor to Dr. Leon Sullivan, organized the first Stevie Wonder March to make Dr. King's birthday a national holiday and was an advisor to Alex Haley, author of the epic book "Roots" which provided the impetus for the historic TV series.

Aside from all his public service achievements, Ofield always find time to nurture the next generation of communicators and political minds. As an adjunct professor for 25 years at the Howard University John H. Johnson School of Communication, Ofield is credited with influencing hundreds of students to enter the field of public relations. He also taught public relations at the American University for eight years.

In politics, Ofield served as a communications consultant to the Democratic National Committee in six presidential campaigns. In 1998, Ofield worked very closely with me in developing the national African American media strategy that helped generate a large black voter turnout that helped Democrats to gain control of the House of Representatives.

Ofield is credited with having tremendous impact on the professional lives of many. Radio One Founder Cathy Hughes says there would not be a Radio One without the early support and continuing advice of Ofield. Upon receiving his graduate degree from Princeton University, Robert Johnson called Ofield who arranged the first two jobs for Johnson in Washington, D.C. prior to his founding BET.

In 2001, Ofield became the first African American to win the Public Relations Society of America's Gold Anvil, the highest individual awards given in the public relations industry. In 2004, PRWeek named him one of this nation's top five national communicators. In 2009, Dukes succeeded Dr. C. Delores Tucker as President of the Bethune-DuBois Institute.

Ofield's other professional recognition includes: being named by the Washington Post as one of the top five PR persuaders in Washington; among the first to be inducted into the Washington, D.C. Public Relations Hall of Fame; inducted into the Commonwealth of Virginia Communications Hall of Fame; and receiving the Wayne State University 2010 Alumni Achievement Award.

Ofield's list of accomplishments goes on and on, but what his friendship meant to me and so many people is immeasurable. I want to express my deepest condolences to his beautiful family. Ofield Dukes was one of a kind and he will be deeply missed. His legacy will last throughout Washington and our country.